

Current major events

On Hajj Requirements: Saudi Health Measures, 2008

As part of preparations for Hajj and Umra seasons for the year 1429 H (2008), the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has issued health requirements for travellers to Saudi Arabia in connection with performing Hajj and Umra this year.

Editorial note

For some years now at the request of the Government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, WHO has published the "Health conditions for travellers to Saudi Arabia for pilgrimage to Mecca (Hajj)" in the Weekly Epidemiological Record. After entry into force of the International Health Regulations, 2005 [IHR (2005)], these health measures received some attention.

Annex 7 of IHR (2005) entitled "Requirements concerning vaccination or prophylaxis for specific diseases" clearly supports vaccination against yellow fever may be required of any traveller leaving an area where the Organization has determined that a risk of yellow fever transmission is present.

According to Paragraph 8 of Article 43 of IHR (2005), such additional health measures for travellers (vaccination against meningococcal meningitis and poliomyelitis), among other things, should be based on (a) Scientific principles; (b) Available scientific evidence of a risk to human health, or where such evidence is insufficient, the available information including from WHO and other relevant inter-governmental Organizations and international bodies; and (c) Any available scientific guidance or advice from WHO.

As travellers to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia who fail to comply with the required measures may experience "a significant interference with international traffic" as defined by the IHR(2005), application of these additional health measures should be accompanied by information explaining the public health

Health measures needed for Hajj and Umra seasons, 2008

- All travellers arriving from countries at risk of Yellow Fever transmission need to present a valid yellow fever vaccination certificate showing that the person was vaccinated at least 10 days and not more than 10 years before coming to the border;
- Travellers from around the world are required to produce a certificate of vaccination with the quadrivalent (ACYW135) vaccine against meningococcal meningitis issued not more than 3 years and not less than 10 days before arrival in Saudi Arabia.
- All people under the age of 15 years travelling to Saudi Arabia from polio-affected countries must be vaccinated against poliomyelitis with the oral polio vaccine (OPV) and should show a proof of vaccination 6 weeks prior to application for entry visa; All travellers from **Afghanistan, India, Nigeria and Pakistan**, regardless of age should receive 1 dose of OPV 6 weeks prior to departures for Saudi Arabia.

Travel Advice (Optional):

It is recommended that:

- All pilgrims be vaccinated against seasonal influenza before arrival; especially, the elderly and those with chronic chest or heart disease or cardiac, hepatic or renal failure.
- All pilgrims carry no food with them. Only properly canned foods available in quantities sufficient for one person for the duration of travel would be permissible.

rationale, reference to any relevant WHO guidance and relevant scientific information supporting them. The proposed measures shall not be more restrictive of international traffic and not more invasive or intrusive to persons than reasonably available alternatives that would achieve the appropriate level of health protection.

Travel advice is optional and could not be set as requirements according to IHR 2005. Travellers may encounter significant changes in altitude, humidity, microbes and temperature, which can result in ill-health. In addition, serious health risks may arise in areas where accommodation is of poor quality, hygiene and sanitation are inadequate, medical services are not well developed and clean water is unavailable. Travelers should be informed about potential hazards of the countries they are travelling to and learn how to minimize any risk to their health.

Update on outbreaks

in the Eastern Mediterranean Region

CCHF: in Afghanistan, **Dengue:** in Saudi Arabia. **Cholera:** in Iraq; Somalia, **Hepatitis –E:** in Sudan

Current public health events of international concern

[cumulative N° of cases (deaths), CFR %]

Avian influenza

Egypt	[50 (22), 44%]
Indonesia	[137 (112), 81.7%]

AWD/Cholera

Somalia	[261 (0), 0.0%]
Iran	[131 (4), 3%]
Afghanistan	[20 (0), 0.0%]
Iraq	[419 (7), 1.6%]
Guinea Bissau	[7166 (133), 1.9%]

Dengue fever

Saudi Arabia	[533 (?), ?%]
Yemen	[1001 (?), ?%]

Hepatitis E

Uganda	[6530 (104), 1.6%]
Sudan	[224 (23), 10.2%*]

Monkey Pox

DRC Congo	[616 (41), 6.7%]
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Yellow fever

Cote d' Ivoire	[6 (0), 0%]
Guinea	[2 (0), 0%]

Crimean Congo H. Fever

Afghanistan	[24 (4), 16.6%]
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(* = Unofficial figures) CFR = Case-Fatality Rate
? = No data